Salisbury University
Nabb Research Center
for Delmarva History and Culture
Chesapeake Bay

Shoreline

Vol. 13, Issue 1, January 2006

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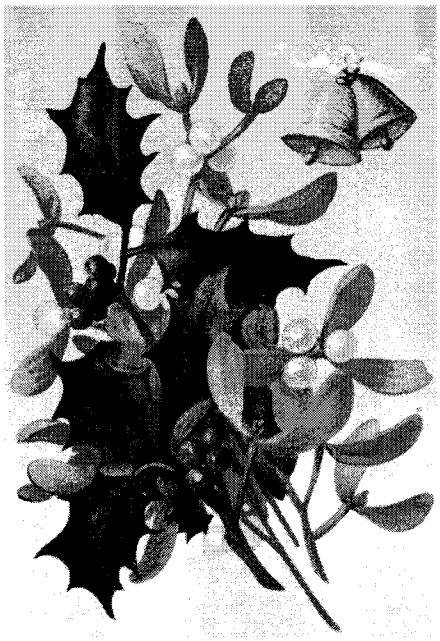
Ed Nabb's Mistletoe and Holly Fly In

By Vaughn Baker



Our patron, Ed Nabb, started a Christmas tradition in 1968 when he "airlifted" mistletoe and holly to the remote little island of Tangier in the Chesapeake Bay. Tangier is famous for seafood, but it becomes readily evident that Christmas greens are not a local product. The folks who live on Tangier still speak with what can be described as a Elizabethan English accent spiced with various words in a southern drawl.

A friend, William Shettle of Beverly, asked me to join him in what has become known among pilots as a "Fly-in to Tangier." I immediately appointed myself the official representative of the Nabb Research Center and reported to the flight line early on a bitterly cold December morning, and we flew from Salisbury to the airport in Cambridge. With the passing of his father, Edward Nabb Jr. assumed the organizational responsibilities of this annual event, and we gathered with other pilots awaiting our flight briefing by "flight commander" Nabb. After the official briefing, we cheerfully saluted and grabbed our bags of Christmas greenery that children from the Dorchester 4H had collected from the farm of a local citizen. We loaded our precious cargo, and then two dozen pilots checked their aircraft and started the engines. Nabb ordered all slower aircraft to depart first so we all would descend on the small airstrip at Tangier at about the same time. After a relatively short flight due south from Cambridge, we spotted the small island and just slightly shorter airstrip and began to position our planes in the flight pattern. After landing, each plane squeezed onto the tarmac at the northern end of the island.

Of course, as it should be, Santa Claus piloted the first and fastest plane loaded with toys and gifts for the children on Tangier. Santa was met by the anxious children of Tangier along with their mothers who were in attendance with the family golf carts. That's right; there is not enough room on the small little island in the middle of the Chesapeake Bay for automobiles. But golf carts were in abundance, and most of them had been winterized with plastic curtains to knock down the bone-chilling wind that comes across the bay.

Each flight crew disembarked, and we took our cargo to the church where it was to be blessed before being distributed to the waiting households. The children dragged Santa Claus into the community center where he joyfully spent time with each child and gave them gifts. The mothers had prepared a spread of Christmas cookies and goodies, and the pilots huddled around these tasteful snacks.

While the children enjoyed themselves, William and I walked the length of Tangier along the narrow oyster shell packed paths that serve as streets. Our only disappointment was that none of the summertime restaurants were open, nor did we ever find a fried oyster sandwich. We did talk with some of the locals about life on the islands, made promises to return next year, and then with proper adieu walked back to the airstrip. After we returned to William's plane and a proper inspection, certainly more than kicking the tires, we took to the sky above the Chesapeake.

Instead of returning to Cambridge, we took an easterly heading over the barrier islands along Virginia's Eastern Shore. William was kind enough to take me over various locations my ancestors have resided during the last 12 generations. After several wonderful hours, we returned to the flight line at Salisbury.

Here is a special tribute to the memory of Ed Nabb for the wonderful tradition, and a thank you to Ed Nabb Jr. for continuing it.

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"We're History...Without You"

Announcements

The Nabb Research Center announces Nabb Board of Directors member Mr. Gary Outten has been elected as Chair of the Board. We also welcome four new members to the Board of Directors:

Mrs. Carolyn A. Adkins, of Mardela Springs, Hebron Savings Bank Branch Manager and Security Officer, grew up in Sharptown and always expressed an interest in local history.

Mrs. Eleanor Mulligan, of Salisbury, once a career singer, has written for several publications and looks forward to volunteering her time to the Center's benefit.

Mr. Louis Parsons, of Ocean City, native of the Eastern Shore, was introduced to the Nabb Center as a past auction chair at the Cellar House Fundraiser Event 2005. He will be joining the Memorial Program Committee and looks forward to helping out with this year's fundraiser at Water's Edge in West Ocean City.

Mrs. Diane Savage, of Berlin, community activist and member of the board of directors for the Salisbury University Foundation since 1985.

SAVE THE DATE OF JUNE 3
FOR OUR FUNDRAISER
RUSTIC TALES
AT WATER'S EDGE 2006,
WORCESTER COUNTY -
BAYSIDE.

Last Chance! Nabb Book Club

Anticipating the 400th year celebration of the Jamestown Colony, the Nabb Research Center would like our members to comment on whether there is an interest in forming a book club that would read selections from Jamestown Narratives: Eyewitness Accounts of the Virginia Colony by Edward Wright Haile. The group would meet once a month beginning in February and discuss the agreed upon narrative(s). Additional programming may be developed as the year progresses. If you are interested in this program, please call 410-543-6312 or e-mail rcdhac@salisbury.edu. In your reply, please indicate a preference for afternoon or early evening meetings. If we hear from 15 members, we will proceed with planning and contact interested participants with dates and time.

Book group participants will be responsible for purchasing the book. An example of an online vendor, the Virginia Historical Society, sells the title for $39.35.

Coming Soon: African-American Photograph Lecture

In honor of Black History Month, Ross J. Kelbaugh will discuss the identification and care of African-American photographs. The lecture is scheduled for 3:30 p.m. on Thursday, February 23, in the Great Hall of Holloway Hall. This program is made possible through a grant by Nabb members Niel and Helen Carey of Ellicott City, MD.